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ROUTINE

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CFR REPORT, INFORM CONSULS, CINC/SHAPE FOR POLADS ONLY

E.O. 12065: GDS, 4/4/85 (FLEISCHER, LOWELL R.)

TAGS: XX, US

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3. MEA - AFGHANISTAN: TARAKI REGIME CONFRONTS CONTINUED UNREST (CONFIDENTIAL)

IN A MOVE REFLECTING THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT'S (DRA) HEIGHTENED CONCERN ABOUT DOMESTIC SECURITY, A NEW HIGH DEFENSE COUNCIL HAS BEEN FORMED UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF PRESIDENT NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAKI. AT THE SAME TIME, REGIME STRONGMAN HAFIZULLAH AMIN, FORMERLY DEPUTY PRIME AND FOREIGN MINISTER, HAS BEEN PROMOTED TO FIRST MINISTER AND HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. AMIN, WHO RETAINS HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY PORTFOLIO, HAS NAMED A NEW CABINET LITTLE CHANGED FROM THE PREVIOUS ONE. THE APPOINTMENT OF MAJOR ASLAM WATANJAR, A LEADER OF LAST APRIL'S COUP, AS DEFENSE MINISTER AND THE CONTINUATION OF TWO OTHER YOUNG LEFTIST MILITARY OFFICERS IN THE CABINET, HIGHLIGHTS THE CLOSE TIES WHICH CONTINUE BETWEEN THE RULING PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE ARMED FORCES.

FIGHTING CONTINUES BETWEEN DRA FORCES AND TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS DISSIDENTS IN BOTH EASTERN AND WESTERN AFGHANISTAN. AS A FURTHER INDICATION OF THE REGIME'S CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY, FOREIGN DIPLOMATS HAVE BEEN RESTRICTED TO A 20 KM RADIUS OF KABUL EXCEPT FOR OVERLAND TRAVEL TO THE PAKISTAN BORDER TO TORKHAM. THE REGIME IS ALSO SHOWING INCREASING SENSITIVITY TO CHARGES PROMOTED BY THE DISSIDENTS THAT IT IS ANTI-ISLAMIC AND HAS PERSECUTED RELIGIOUS LEADERS.

A RECENT SOVIET MILITARY AIRLIFT OPENED THE DOOR TO A MORE ACTIVE SOVIET ROLE IN THE FIGHTING IN AFGHANISTAN. MEANWHILE, THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO CHARGE OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE AND HAVE ESCALATED THEIR ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE U.S. WE HAVE RESPONDED WITH PROTESTS IN MOSCOW AS WELL AS TWO PUBLIC STATEMENTS, MOST RECENTLY ON APRIL 2 IN WHICH WE FURTHER QUESTIONED SOVIET INTENTIONS REGARDING INTERFERENCE IN AFGHANISTAN'S AFFAIRS.

U.S.-AFGHAN RELATIONS CONTINUE AT A LOW EBB. THE LAST OF OUR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ARE DEPARTING AFGHANISTAN AND OUR MISSION IN KABUL IS TRIMMING DOWN TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF BOTH OUR CONCERNS FOR THE SAFETY OF AMERICANS AS WELL AS THE REDUCED LEVEL OF OUR ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN.

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